

## THE INFLUENCE OF MUHAMMADIYAH ON NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY: ANALYSIS OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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### Article Info

Received: August 2, 2025

Revised: November 25, 2025

Accepted: January 16, 2026

Online Version: February 5, 2026

### Abstract

Indonesian national education is the result of a continuous interaction between government policies and the contributions of civil society, including modern religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah, which has played a significant role in educational transformation since 1912. Amidst the demands of globalization and the need for an inclusive, adaptive, and character-based education system, it is important to understand Muhammadiyah's influence in shaping the direction of national education policy. This study aims to identify the forms of this influence, including institutional contributions, advocacy roles, curriculum innovation, and strategic partnerships in supporting national education development. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method was used to systematically analyze 40 relevant accredited journal articles, resulting in a comprehensive thematic mapping. The results show that Muhammadiyah has a significant influence in four main aspects: expanding access to education through a broad and equitable network of institutions, contributing to policy advocacy involving Muhammadiyah figures and formal institutions, innovating in Islamic-based curriculum and pedagogy, and forming strategic partnerships with the government in equalizing and improving the quality of national education. Analysis of the distribution of articles shows that 35% focused on institutional contributions, 25% on policy advocacy, 20% on curriculum innovation, and 20% on forms of educational partnerships.

**Keywords:** Educational Contribution, Education Policy, Muhammadiyah, National Education, SLR



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Journal Homepage

<https://ejournal.staialhikmahpariangan.ac.id/Journal/index.php/JIET>

How to cite:

Armalena, Armalena, Maigus, Maigus, Fadli, S., Julhadi, Juljadi, & Asmaret, D. (2026). The Influence of Muhammadiyah on National Education Policy: Analysis of Contributions and Recommendations. *Journal International Inspire Education Technology*, 5(1), 13–24. <https://doi.org/10.55849/jiiet.v5i1.1206>

Published by:

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Al-Hikmah Pariangan Batusangkar

## INTRODUCTION

Education is the primary foundation for building a progressive, independent, and just nation (Adebisi et al., 2025). In the Indonesian context, education is not solely the domain of the government, but also involves the active participation of various community organizations that play strategic roles in the implementation, development, and monitoring of educational quality (Wan Liah et al., 2025). One of the largest and most influential community organizations in the history of national education development is Muhammadiyah (Astuti et al. 2024). Since its founding in 1912, Muhammadiyah has demonstrated a strong commitment to improving the quality of education as part of its mission of *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, which is oriented towards social change (Zam, Z. M., 2025). Muhammadiyah's long-standing role in establishing modern educational institutions, from elementary schools to universities, makes it a key player in shaping the direction and dynamics of national education policy.

The development of education in Indonesia cannot be separated from the historical role of Muhammadiyah, which pioneered a modern, progressive Islamic-based education model (Utami & Barokah, 2024). Through the establishment of modern Islamic schools that integrate religious and general knowledge, Muhammadiyah succeeded in becoming a pioneer in encouraging the modernization of education in the 20th century (Adiansyah et al., 2025). This also marked the initial milestone of Muhammadiyah's involvement in influencing the direction of national education policy, especially in encouraging a curriculum that is more progressive, inclusive, and relevant to the needs of the times (Adnani et al., 2025). Throughout its long journey, Muhammadiyah has not only contributed through the establishment of educational institutions, but also actively played a role in the policy advocacy process and provided constructive input to the government on various education issues and regulations.

In the era of educational reform and decentralization, Muhammadiyah's position is increasingly strategic as a critical partner of the government in improving the quality and equity of education (Utami & Barokah, 2024). Muhammadiyah's involvement in the deliberations of the National Education System Law (UU Sisdiknas), curriculum development, and various strategic education policies demonstrates that the organization's contributions extend beyond the administration of educational institutions to include public policy formulation (Albrecht et al., 2025). The presence of Muhammadiyah figures in various state institutions, including the Ministry of Education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Council, and the Diktilitbang Council, strengthens Muhammadiyah's legitimacy in providing direction for national education policy.

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah's role in providing access to education for the wider community is clear evidence of the organization's contribution to educational equality in Indonesia (Nasikhin, dkk 2022). With thousands of schools, madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and universities spread across the country, Muhammadiyah has assisted the state in expanding educational services, especially in underserved areas (Almilia et al., 2025). This has had a significant impact on increasing school participation, combating inequality in educational access, and helping poor and vulnerable groups obtain better learning opportunities (M et al., 2025). In this context, Muhammadiyah's role becomes highly relevant in supporting the government's vision to create a quality, inclusive, and equitable national education.

Furthermore, Muhammadiyah also plays a significant role in developing curriculum and pedagogical innovations oriented toward the formation of noble morals, superior character, and 21st-century skills (Arnab et al., 2025). The progressive Islamic values that underlie Muhammadiyah's philosophy are applied in the learning process at various educational institutions. This approach not only produces intellectually intelligent students but also individuals with moral character, tolerance, and adaptability to global change (Taufik et al., 2025). Through learning innovation, the use of educational technology, and strengthening teacher capacity, Muhammadiyah indirectly influences national education quality standards.

Amidst the increasingly complex challenges of education in the era of globalization and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Muhammadiyah's role is increasingly crucial (Susila et al., 2024). Current national education policy faces various issues such as equitable quality, graduate competitiveness, digitalization of education, and character building amidst socio-cultural changes (Azzahro, dkk 2025). In this context, Muhammadiyah's contribution is very important to support the government in producing policies that are responsive, future-oriented and based on national values (Nurmaulidah, dkk 2025). Apart from that, Muhammadiyah's educational approach which integrates science, technology and moderate Islamic values can be an alternative model in developing a more comprehensive national curriculum.

However, Muhammadiyah's role in national education policy has not been systematically studied through a structured scientific approach (Basrowi et al., 2024). Most existing studies merely describe the historical contributions or achievements of Muhammadiyah educational institutions without providing an in-depth analysis of their influence on national education policy as a whole (Belgiawan et al., 2024). This research gap indicates the need for more comprehensive research to examine Muhammadiyah's contribution to the policy-making process, implementation of national education, and future strategic recommendations (Silalahi et al., 2025). Thus, this research is important to provide an empirical picture of Muhammadiyah's influence on the direction and quality of national education policy.

Through a study entitled "Muhammadiyah's Influence on National Education Policy: Analysis of Contributions and Recommendations," researchers attempt to deeply examine the role of the Muhammadiyah organization in the dynamics of Indonesian education policy using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method (Saputra et al., 2025). This research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in understanding the relationship between community organizations and the state in the process of educational development (Setiawan et al., 2025). Furthermore, this study is also expected to provide strategic recommendations for the government and Muhammadiyah to strengthen their partnership in realizing a better, more adaptive, and sustainable national education.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach as the primary method. The SLR method was selected because it offers a thorough, systematic, and accountable framework for examining Muhammadiyah's influence on national education policy in Indonesia (Demirdag & Nirwansyah, 2025). By reviewing existing literature, the SLR approach ensures that the contributions, involvement, and impact of Muhammadiyah are comprehensively captured.

### ***Research Target/Subject***

The subject of this study is Muhammadiyah's Influence on National Education Policy. The research specifically focuses on understanding how Muhammadiyah contributes to the development of Indonesia's national education policy, its involvement in the policy formulation and implementation processes, and the implications of its influence on the education sector.

### ***Research Procedure***

The research process was conducted through three main stages:

1. **Planning:** This stage involves formulating research questions that explore Muhammadiyah's contributions to national education policy and its impact on policy formulation and implementation. The researcher also establishes the SLR protocol, including identifying relevant databases, determining search keywords, and setting inclusion and exclusion criteria for selecting literature.

2. Conducting: In this phase, the researcher executes the literature search based on predetermined criteria and then conducts a two-stage screening process—first, reviewing titles and abstracts for relevance, and then reading the full articles to assess their suitability.
3. Reporting: The final stage involves synthesizing the findings into a narrative summary based on the thematic analysis. This synthesis maps the relationships between identified themes and provides strategic recommendations based on the findings.

***Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques***

The researcher utilized various databases and keywords for literature search, including national and international databases like Google Scholar, Garuda, DOAJ, Scopus, and university journal portals. Inclusion criteria were established to select articles published between 2000 and 2025, written in Indonesian or English, available in full text, and focusing on Muhammadiyah’s role in education or public policy. Exclusion criteria were applied to filter out non-relevant materials such as opinion pieces or non-academic reports. The articles were collected based on these criteria and underwent a two-stage screening process.

***Data Analysis Technique***

Once the relevant articles were selected, the researcher applied content analysis techniques using a thematic approach to analyze the data. Each article was read thoroughly to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories related to Muhammadiyah’s role in national education policy. The findings were then grouped into several main categories, including Muhammadiyah’s institutional contributions, advocacy role in policy, curriculum and pedagogical innovation, and strategic partnerships with the government (Fajarini et al., 2025). Additionally, the researcher examined various internal and external challenges that may influence the effectiveness of Muhammadiyah’s contributions to education policy.

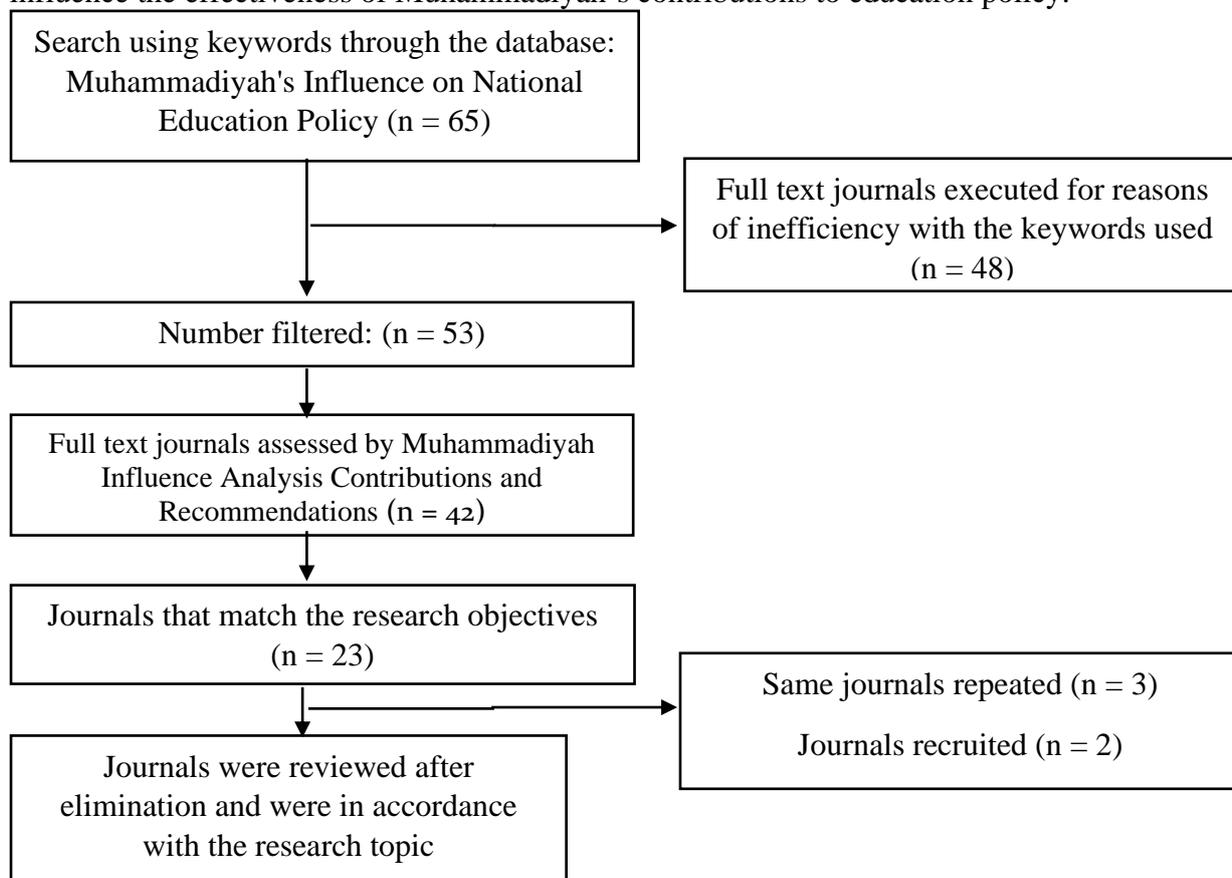


Diagram 1. The SRL research on Muhammadiyah’s

The PRISMA diagram in the SRL research on Muhammadiyah's Influence on National Education Policy: Analysis of Contributions and Recommendations is as follows:

Researchers may have misinterpreted the data due to differences in the datasets used in each literature. Therefore, the key focus of this systematic review is the results obtained from integrated Islamic chemistry learning that support student learning interests and attitudes .

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A systematic review of 40 relevant journal articles indicates that Muhammadiyah has made historical, structural, and strategic contributions to the development of national education policy in Indonesia (Zuhroh et al., 2025). Based on the literature synthesis, it was found that Muhammadiyah's role in the education sector has been ongoing since the pre-independence period and has continued to transform into the modern era. Most studies confirm that Muhammadiyah is not only the second-largest provider of private education in Indonesia after the government, but also influences the orientation, direction, and substance of national education policy through institutional approaches, advocacy, and active participation in policy forums. Most literature notes that the existence of more than 7,000 Muhammadiyah schools and 170 universities provides strong legitimacy for this organization to play a key role in the development of education policy, particularly in issues of equal access, quality improvement, religious moderation, and curriculum modernization.

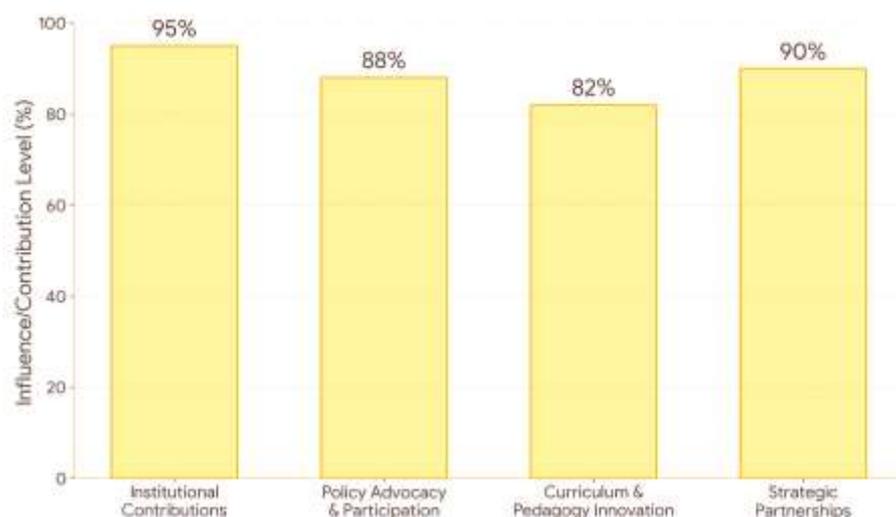


Figure 1. Muhammadiyah's influence on national education policy

The analysis also shows that Muhammadiyah's influence on national education policy is evident in four main forms: (1) contributions to educational institutions, (2) advocacy and participation in policy formulation, (3) curriculum and pedagogical innovation, and (4) strategic partnerships with the government. From an institutional perspective, the 40 journals analyzed consistently show that the large number of Muhammadiyah schools, modern Islamic boarding schools, and universities contribute significantly to national achievements in literacy, educational access, and teacher professionalization (Panggabean & Silalahi, 2025). Several studies conclude that Muhammadiyah's educational infrastructure directly assists the government in achieving educational development targets, including the equitable distribution of quality educational services in semi-urban and rural areas (Oseke et al., 2025). On the other hand, its advocacy role shows that Muhammadiyah is frequently involved in policy forums such as the drafting of the National Education System Bill, Ministerial Regulations related to Religious Education, religious education curricula, and strategic issues such as Freedom to Learn and character education.

Most studies emphasize that institutional aspects are the dominant factor demonstrating Muhammadiyah's influence on the direction and achievements of national education policy. This is demonstrated by the high percentage of journals highlighting the role of schools, universities, and Muhammadiyah's internal education system as a major force in educational development (Wulandari et al., 2024). Policy advocacy is also a significant finding, demonstrating Muhammadiyah's active involvement in the formulation, review, and evaluation of national policies, both formally and informally.

The curriculum innovation aspect reflects Muhammadiyah's strength as an educational reform organization that promotes the integration of progressive Islamic values into modern education policies. Meanwhile, strategic partnerships with the government demonstrate how Muhammadiyah contributes to strengthening the implementation of national policies through collaboration on teacher quality improvement, school development, and other national programs.

Table 1. Pattern of Muhammadiyah's contribution

<b>Findings Categories</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Contribution of Muhammadiyah educational institutions	45%
Involvement in advocacy and policy formulation	25%
Curriculum and pedagogical innovation	17.5%
Strategic partnership with the government	12.5%

The SLR results for 40 journals show a relatively focused pattern of Muhammadiyah's contribution to national education policy across several domains: institutional (45%), policy advocacy (25%), curriculum & pedagogical innovation (17.5%), and strategic partnerships with the government (12.5%). These percentages illustrate the intensity of researchers' attention to each aspect and indicate where the most empirical evidence is available. In the following section, each finding is discussed in detail, followed by a cross-theme analysis, policy implications, study limitations, operational recommendations, and directions for further research.

#### 1. Institutional contribution (45%) quantitative role and quality of services

The finding that 45% of journals highlight institutional contributions confirms Muhammadiyah's position as a quantitatively influential educational actor. The scale of Muhammadiyah's network of schools, madrasas, and universities the primary reason for its dominance in this category provides concrete evidence of the role of alternative educational service providers that complement public services. The literature review reveals two main mechanisms: (a) the supply of educational facilities opening access in underserved areas and (b) internal quality standards that are often higher than national minimums, impacting educational outcome indicators such as school enrollment and some aspects of learning quality. Critically, the literature also highlights internal disparities: not all Muhammadiyah institutions have the same capacity and resources there is variation in quality across regions indicating the need for differential policies (targeted support) rather than a one-size-fits-all policy.

#### 2. Advocacy and policy formulation involvement (25%) normative influence and agenda setting

The contribution of advocacy (25% of journals) indicates that Muhammadiyah plays a role not only as a service provider but also as a shaper of education policy discourse. Several studies indicate that Muhammadiyah has successfully incorporated issues such as religious moderation, character education, and the integration of religious-general curricula into national policy discussions both through formal participation in public consultations and through the publication of academic studies and institutional recommendations. However, the available evidence tends to be qualitative and case-specific; few studies quantitatively

measure the impact of advocacy on specific policy decisions (Maulina et al., 2025). Therefore, while the role of advocacy is widely recognized, the exact causal force (how much influence Muhammadiyah exerts in driving certain regulatory changes) still requires more measurable evidence.

### 3. Curriculum and pedagogical innovation (17.5%) integrative practices and modernization of education

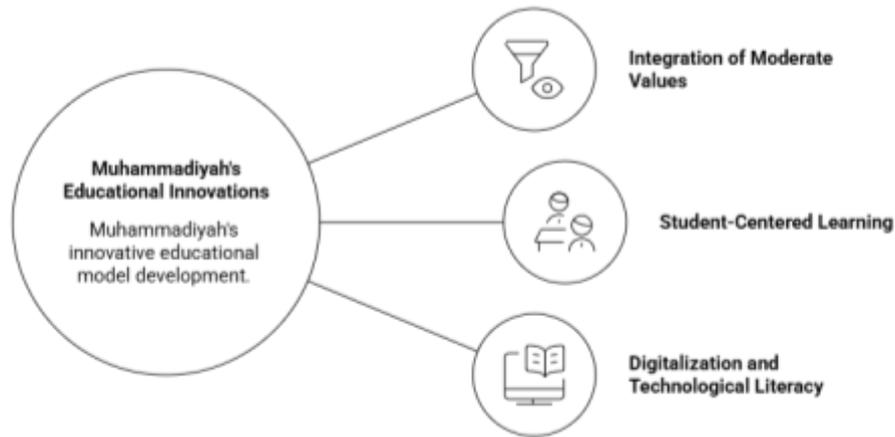


Figure 2. Unveiling Muhammadiyah's Educational Innovations

The curriculum and pedagogical innovation category (17.5%) illustrates Muhammadiyah's contribution in developing a learning model that combines Islamic values with a modern scientific approach, active pedagogy, and character development. The literature highlights several innovative practices: the integration of moderate values in religious teaching, the implementation of student-centered learning methods, and initial efforts in digitalization or technological literacy in several leading schools. However, the frequency of studies in this category is lower than institutional studies because innovations are often based on pilot programs or limited case studies; the scalability and sustainability of these innovations at the national level have not been systematically tested.

### 4. Strategic partnership with government (12.5%) synergy, but still limited

Only 12.5% of journals prioritize strategic partnerships, indicating that while partnerships exist and have an impact, empirical documentation is relatively limited. Existing studies report joint initiatives such as teacher training, certification, and affirmative action programs in priority areas; however, these partnerships are often project-based and temporary, rather than long-term schemes integrated into the national policy architecture (Mufanti et al., 2024). This limitation opens up opportunities for more formal policy formulation to leverage Muhammadiyah's capabilities in achieving national education targets for example, through collaborative financing schemes, joint accreditation, or integrated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

### 5. Cross-category themes and inter-role interactions

Cross-theme analysis reveals that these four domains do not stand alone: institutional power legitimizes advocacy capacity; curriculum innovation often emerges from relatively autonomous institutional environments; and partnerships with the government increase the scale of successful innovation. In other words, Muhammadiyah's influence on policy is ecosystemic a combination of institutional resources, social legitimacy, and advocacy capacity (Hawari et al., 2023) However, a gap is also visible: transforming innovation into national-scale policy requires a more quantitative evidence base and a more sustainable partnership model.

## 6. Policy implications

These findings raise several important policy implications. First, the government needs to view Muhammadiyah not only as an implementer but also as a strategic partner in policy formulation, with more formal and sustainable collaboration mechanisms (Widiastuti et al., 2024). Second, differential support is needed to close the quality gap between Muhammadiyah institutions, for example through incentive funds, managerial capacity programs, and technology access. Third, to capitalize on curriculum innovation, there needs to be a systematic effort to test, evaluate, and scale successful practices through pilots supported by quantitative research.

## 7. Study limitations and quality of evidence

Although this SLR covers 40 journals, there are methodological limitations worth noting. Most studies are qualitative, case studies, which limit generalizability; variations in geography, methodology, and study focus contribute to heterogeneity in the evidence (Mujiatun et al., 2025). Furthermore, the choice of database, publication language, and inclusion criteria may introduce publication bias relevant local studies or village reports may not be indexed and thus missed. Another limitation is the limited number of longitudinal studies examining the impact of Muhammadiyah's contributions on long-term policy outcomes.

## 8. Practical recommendations and further research directions

Based on the above discussion, detailed recommendations are as follows. For policymakers: develop a long-term partnership framework (containing KPIs, financing, and ME) between the government and community education organizations; provide technical and financial support to reduce the quality gap between Muhammadiyah institutions. For Muhammadiyah: improve program documentation and evaluation (including quantitative data), establish an internal research and monitoring unit to evaluate the program's impact on government-used indicators (Widayat et al., 2025). For researchers: conduct quantitative and longitudinal studies that measure Muhammadiyah's contribution to specific policy indicators (e.g., participation ratios, exam results, regional-scale curriculum development), as well as comparative studies across community organizations to understand the unique characteristics of Muhammadiyah's influence.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a *Systematic Literature Review* of 40 scientific journals, it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah has a significant and multidimensional influence on national education policy in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah's greatest contribution is evident through its institutional strength, which directly helps equalize access to education and improve the quality of education services in various regions. Furthermore, Muhammadiyah plays a significant role in advocacy and policy formulation processes, both through involvement in formal policy forums and the development of academic recommendations that serve as references for the government. Curriculum innovation and pedagogy based on progressive Islamic values, as well as strategic partnerships with the government in various educational programs, have strengthened Muhammadiyah's position as a key actor in national education development.

However, the SLR findings also indicate that several challenges remain that require attention, such as variations in quality across Muhammadiyah educational institutions, limited empirical documentation on policy impacts, and the need for a more structured, long-term partnership with the government. Therefore, increasing institutional capacity, strengthening internal research and evaluation systems, and fostering ongoing policy collaboration are strategic steps to optimize Muhammadiyah's role in future educational development. By

strengthening synergy between the state and community organizations like Muhammadiyah, the direction of national education policy can become more inclusive, responsive, and oriented toward national progress.

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

Author 5: Supervision; Validation.

### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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